

At the inspections of the year 2,270 children were on the rolls, and 810 passed the standard examination—330 in the First Standard, 230 in the Second, 183 in the Third, and 67 in the Fourth. The “percentage of passes” therefore—in the sense in which that term is used in the public-school system—is about 36.

The staff of Native village-school teachers at the end of the year consisted of 57 head-masters (at salaries varying from £84 to £205), 9 head-mistresses (£72 to £190), 26 assistant mistresses (£10 to £55), 1 assistant master—a Maori— (£20), and 38 teachers of sewing (£20 each).

The expenditure for 1891 was £15,251 1s. 11d.; towards which amount a contribution of £91 1s. 6d. was received from the income of Native reserves. The amount absorbed in the salaries of village-school teachers, and in allowances to them for removals and other purposes, was £11,024 13s. 6d., and the other items are—School requisites, £380 6s. 6d.; prizes, £296 17s. 5d.; repairs and small works, £268 5s. 1d.; inspection, including travelling, £652 1s. 9d.; grants to boarding-schools and travelling expenses of scholars, £1,631 7s.; buildings, fencing, and furniture, £980 7s. 6d.; sundries, £17 3s. 2d.

Mr. Bishop, Mr. Booth, Mr. Bush, and Mr. Wilkinson continue to render most valuable service to the Department as District Superintendents of Native Schools.

Mr. Pope’s annual report on the inspection of all the schools is printed as a separate paper (E.—2). In the latter part of the year the Minister of Education visited twenty-one schools, accompanied during the greater part of the journey by the Assistant Inspector; and surprise visits, in addition to such as were made by the Inspector, were paid to twelve other schools by the Chief Clerk of the Department. The following memorandum and circular were afterwards sent to all the teachers. The memorandum relates to the manner in which the registers are kept :—

MEMORANDUM FOR TEACHERS OF NATIVE SCHOOLS.

Teachers of Native schools are aware that a part of their salary depends on the average attendance of pupils. It is well that they should know that it is often said by adverse critics of the Native-school system that the rolls are kept in such a manner as to invalidate all returns based upon them. The eighth paragraph of the “Instructions” printed on the back of the daily register contains a plain and peremptory rule for marking the register in such a way as to render it possible for an official visitor entering the school during the last half of the morning or afternoon to see for himself whether, on that occasion, the entries in the register are truly made. The rule is too plain to be misunderstood; the reason of it is evident; and nearly all the teachers have had their attention called to it, in many cases because of their neglect of it. It is a rule not made for the special case of the Maori schools, but applicable to all the public schools—for which, indeed, it was first framed. There is no excuse whatever for disregarding it, and teachers ought to see that when they disregard it they expose themselves to the suspicion of being willing to keep open an opportunity of falsifying their records. A series of official visits to some of the schools has been lately made out of the usual course, and in a considerable proportion of the schools visited it was found that the rule for the marking of the register was not duly observed. The entries were made in pencil instead of ink; or the attendances were marked, but the total was not entered at the foot of the column; or the entries had not been made for a day or two; or the marking was put off to a later hour than that which is specified in the “Instructions.” No evidence of fraudulent design was brought to light, but it is evident that teachers are not sufficiently impressed with the importance of observing a rule that was intended to establish a practice strict enough to disarm suspicion. In future any teacher found guilty of negligence in this respect will forfeit all right to the increment that depends directly on average attendance, and will be deprived of any status already acquired with respect to seniority. The deprivation of status will be absolute, and the offender will have to begin again as probationer; but that part of the penalty which consists in the withholding of the attendance increment may cease at any time if the Minister, to mark the restoration of confidence, shall so order.

Education Department, Wellington, 1st November, 1891.

WM. JAS. HABENS.

The circular was designed to stimulate and guide the teachers to improvements in the teaching of English :—

Education Department, Wellington, 17th February, 1892.

The Teacher, Native School, ———.

I am directed to inform you that the Minister of Education, in the course of his recent visits to Native schools, was much impressed by the difference between the most efficient schools and those that are less efficient with respect to the attainments made by the pupils in the study of English. The Minister is of opinion that the general standard of proficiency in the comprehension and in the use of our language ought to be very considerably raised, and that this might easily be done if all the teachers had an adequate conception of the difficulties to be overcome, and would maintain an unflinching determination to surmount them.